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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2008

In Today's Papers

The New Symbol of Resistance in Iraq (Sabah)
Media outlets prominently feature the Iraqi journalist's shoe protest as the top story of the day. NTV carries footage of public protests in support of the journalist and reports, "Protesters hit the streets in support of the Iraqi journalist." Mainstream Hurriyet carries the front-page banner headline, "World Shoe Day," as "The journalist who threw his shoe at President Bush is declared a hero in Iraq." Mainstream Sabah calls the infamous shoe, "The New Symbol of Resistance in Iraq." Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak carries the headline, "The Iraqi Journalist Ignites the Fires of Freedom in Iraq." Islamist-oriented Zaman reports, "This Journalist Is Now a Public Hero." Liberal Radikal carries the headline, "A New Flag Greets Bush," and carries a photo of a shoe on a flagpole beside a sign saying "U.S. Get Out." Mainstream Milliyet reports, "The Journalist Everyone Is Talking About," is, "The Latest Hero of the Arab World." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports, "His Shoes Left a Footprint," as "Iraqis filled the streets and waved their shoes in a show of support for the journalist."

Can Atakli writes in mainstream Vatan, "When U.S. troops invaded Iraq in 2003, some people beat Saddam statues with their slippers. At first, this looked like a very funny act to all of us. Later, we learned that this act is a grave insult for Iraqis and thus we understood and respected their feelings. The Iraqi journalist's insult against Bush is a symbolic act. Americans may not even care about this insult, but they should know that this symbolic act will remain in the minds of all people who are against America's mistaken policies."

Derya Sazak writes in mainstream Milliyet, "The shoe thrown at President Bush is a well-deserved farewell gift for him. When the U.S. invaded Iraq five years ago, Iraqis threw their slippers at statues of Saddam and welcomed U.S. troops with flowers. Five years later, those slippers are now shoes and they are aimed Bush. In the name of 'democracy and freedom,' the Bush administration invaded Iraq and the country has deteriorated so badly that the Iraqi people miss former dictator Saddam Hussein. Moreover, in the past five years, one million Iraqi people have lost their lives. After all

the problems he has caused in Iraq, Bush shamelessly says, 'I don't understand why this man would throw shoes at me!' Allow me to explain - this man is enraged by your false claims of WMDs in Iraq five years ago."

President Gul Will Not Travel to Iraq, Russia, or Israel as Planned
Sabah, Milliyet, Hurriyet, Turkiye, Zaman and others: Today's papers report that President Gul will not engage in several foreign trips due to an ear infection. Mainstream Sabah reports that following doctors' recommendation President Gul cancelled his trips to Baghdad on December 20, to Russia on December 25-28, to Israel and Palestine on January 6-8. Mainstream Milliyet reports that a statement from the Presidential Palace said that doctors recommended President Gul should not travel until mid January.

Ergenekon Suspect Veli Kucuk's Defense

All papers report that Ergenekon suspect Veli Kucuk took the stand in his defense yesterday and rejected all accusations against him. He also claimed he was victim of a "state conspiracy plot." Kucuk said that the Ergenekon indictment targeted the Turkish nation and the republic founded by Ataturk. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports that during his defense, Kucuk revealed the names of three secret witnesses of Ergenekon trial. Kucuk's revealing of the names was a warning for the other secret witnesses, adds the paper.

Reactions to Apology Campaign to Armenians

Papers carry a joint statement issued by a group of retired Turkish diplomats who slammed the recent internet petition campaign seeking a public apology to Armenians regarding the 1915 incidents. A group

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of 60 former ambassadors and diplomats, including some current members of the parliament, said in a joint statement that the apology campaign is "unfair, wrong and unfavorable for the national interests." In addition, the statement said, "Such an incorrect and one-sided attempt would lead to disrespecting our history and betraying our people who lost their lives in the violent attacks of the terror organizations in the final days of the Ottoman Empire, as well as after, during the formation of the Republic."

Editorial opinion:

Ali Bayramoglu says in Islamist oriented Yeni Safak: "The Turkish identity should not be based on fears and taboos. But at the same time, the Turkish identity should not be defensive. Once we face history, we will be liberated."

Several papers like Milliyet, Sabah and Radikal reminded their readers about the ongoing internet campaign by providing the address, www.ozurdiliyoruz.com which has received more than 3,000 names.

Sharp Decline in Economic Growth

Papers feature coverage of recent declines in economic indicators. Business daily Dunya carries the headline, "Economic Stagnation." Business daily Referans reports, "Turkey almost avoided recession but now unemployment has reached a peak." The Turkish Statistical Institute announced that third quarter gross domestic product grew 0.5 percent, which is the slowest pace during the same quarter over the last six years. The number of unemployed was registered as 2,548,000 which reached to 10.3 percent.

Meanwhile all papers report an announcement by the Turkish Treasury indicating that an IMF delegation will officially arrive Turkey in January 2009 for talks regarding the 20th stand-by agreement.

Editorial opinion on Riots in Greece

Yalcin Dogan wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "The Turkish media is misrepresenting the nature of the riots in Greece. This is not happening, contrary to common belief, because the police killed a young man. That killing merely sparked the riots, which are meant to send messages against corruption in the government, extreme privatization, and unemployment."

TV News:
CNN Turk

Domestic News

12 people were detained in Hakkari-Cukurca on charges of "aiding PKK terrorists."

Four suspects were arrested in Trabzon for illegal possession of explosives.

International News

A delegation of DTP officials met with Iraqi President Talabani in Suleymanie, northern Iraq

The riots in Greece continue.

Israel released 230 Palestinian prisoners in a gesture to Palestinian President Abbas.

The number of British troops in Afghanistan will increase by 300, said Prime Minister Gordon Brown.
JEFFREY